

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MEXICO 03900 010012 Z

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ACTION ARA-17

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6266

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 3900

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MX

SUBJECT: SALINITY AND BROWNELL VISIT

REF: STATE 98034

1. I HAD LONG AND CORDIAL CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY RABASA THURSDAY FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM CHILE AND ARGENTINA. SALINITY REMAINS PRINCIPAL ITEM ON HIS MIND AND HE EXPRESSED HIGH HOPES THAT NEXT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH BROWNELL HERE WOULD AT LEAST BE PENULTIMATE STEP IN PROCESS OF SETTLING SALINITY PROBLEM WHICH HAS PLAGUED MEXICO FOR SO LONG. HE THOUGHT FOLLOWING EXCHANGES HERE NEXT MONTH, THERE MIGHT BE NEED FOR FINAL TOUCHES WHICH HE COULD PERHAPS SETTLE IN WASHINGTON DURING SUMMER. HE REPEATED NEED FOR PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA TO MAKE SOME RATHER PRECISE OUTLINE OF SETTLEMENT DURING HIS INFORME ( STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE) ON SEPTEMBER 1. HE NOTED THAT BY THAT TIME ECHEVERRIA WOULD HAVE BEEN IN OFFICE NEARLY THREE YEARS AND PEOPLE WOULD CERTAINLY EXPECT TO HAVE A DEFINITIVE SETTLEMENT.

2. PASSING TO MORE PRECISE DETAILS, RABASA REFERRED TO CONVERSATIONS OF TWO BOUNDARY COMMISSIONERS WHICH HE THOUGHT HAD BEEN HELPFUL. HE NOTED PARTICULARLY HERRERA- JORDAN' S REPORT THAT SALINITY AT BORDER WOULD BE IN EXCESS OF ONE HUNDRED PARTS PER MILLION HIGHER THAN AT IMPERIAL DAM. HE SAID MEXICO, AS PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HAD STATED, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MEXICO 03900 010012 Z

STILL EXPECTED " SAME QUALITY OF WATER" AS THAT OF IMPERIAL DAM. HE SAID MEXICO OF COURSE WOULD NOT CAUSE DIFFICULTIES IF SALINITY INCREASED DUE TO NATURAL CAUSES BUT SAID THAT MEXICO WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY FURTHER INCREASES IN SALINITY DUE " TO ACTION OF MAN". IN LATER PART OF TALK HE REFERRED AGAIN TO SIMILARITY OF SALT CONTENT IN WATERS RECEIVED BY US AND BY MEXICO AS US OBJECTIVE SO THIS ETERNAL QUESTION STILL DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ENTIRELY PINNED DOWN.

3. RABASA THEN NOTED THAT US PROPOSAL WAS A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION BUT THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND HE CONSIDERED THIS WAS NOT OF COURSE A TAKE- IT- OR- LEAVE- IT PROPOSITION. THEREFORE DURING FORTHCOMING BROWNELL VISIT, RABASA PLANNED TO PUT FORWARD MEXICAN VIEWS ON OUR PROPOSAL IN THE FORM OF A SERIES OF QUESTIONS AND ALSO DURING THE BROWNELL VISIT PROBABLY TO PUT FORWARD CERTAIN ADDITIONAL MEXICAN VIEWS IN THE FORM OF A COUNTER- PROPOSAL.

4. FOREIGN SECRETARY EXPRESSED HOPE BROWNELL VISIT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITH A MINIMUM OF PUBLICITY SINCE HE STRESSED THAT MEXICAN HOPES WERE VERY HIGH AND HE DID NOT WISH TO ENCOURAGE ANY PREMATURE JUBILATION. HE NOTED THAT INHABITANTS OF MEXICALI VALLEY WERE STILL COUNTING ON DAMAGES AND THAT OUR PROPOSAL HAD NOT EVEN MENTIONED THAT POINT WHICH OF COURSE HE WOULD TAKE UP WITH BROWNELL DURING FORTHCOMING VISIT. HE HOPED WHOLE MATTER COULD BE KEPT AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE UNTIL THERE WAS SOMETHING POSITIVE WHICH THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT COULD ANNOUNCE TO ITS PEOPLE. HE ALSO REFERRED TO CLARIFICATIONS WHICH FRIEDKIN HAD GIVEN IN EL PASO TO EFFECT THAT ALL COSTS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION EVEN IN MEXICO WOULD BE BORNE BY U. S. HE SAID HE HAD MENTIONED THIS TO ECHEVERRIA AND LATTER HAD BEEN MUCH REASSURED AS HE CONSIDERED THIS AN IMPORTANT POINT OF PRINCIPLE.

5. RABASA SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING WITH BROWNELL AND SUGGESTED MONDAY, JUNE 11 FOR FIRST MEETING TO BE FOLLOWED BY TALK WITH PRESIDENT. HE SAID PROPOSAL WHICH SECRETARY ROGERS HAD LEFT CERTAINLY REPRESENTED AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD AND IT NOW REMAINED FOR THE TWO GROUPS TO SUSTAIN THE FORWARD PROGRESS HERE IN JUNE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MEXICO 03900 010012 Z

LOOKING TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT BEFORE SEPTEMBER 1. HE CONCLUDED THAT NO SETTLEMENT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TO ALL MEXICANS BUT THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT ARRANGEMENT COULD BE REACHED FOR WHICH HE AND PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA COULD TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY WITH CONFIDENCE.

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